

# UCL Chamber Music Club

## Newsletter No.10 May 2018



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### Welcome to our newsletter

Welcome to the tenth issue of the Chamber Music Club Newsletter. This time the contents mostly focus in some way on performances and people. In the autumn term we held a concert of works bearing the 'Op.1' designation, and an article by Yvonne Cheng, the concert organiser, follows this up with a brief survey and discussion of some of the more notable examples of this corner of the repertoire. Many of you will remember the 'Landscape' concert in November, and particularly the traditional Swedish music played on the *nyckelharpa* and the duet concertina; Michael Hebbert, one of the performers, provides an introduction to these two fascinating instruments. The latest in our 'meet the committee' series features an interview with Helene Albrecht, currently our Membership Secretary, who appears frequently in our concerts as an accomplished piano soloist and accompanist. Helene has of course regularly taken the role of interviewer previously in this series, but rather than expect her to interview herself we decided that I should do the honours on this occasion. We hope you enjoy this item, which could have been subtitled 'The Interviewer Interviewed'! Bill Tuck, a long-standing member and former Chair, reminisces about the Club in the 1980s and some of the people who contributed largely to its activities. One such of course, about whom Bill writes, was Emeritus Professor John Lindon of UCL's Italian department, and we learnt with regret of his death in February. As a performer and committee member (at various times Chair and Treasurer) John was for many years one of the outstanding figures in the Club, and he was given Honorary Life membership when he stepped down from the committee some years ago; we shall be dedicating one of our concerts in the forthcoming 2018-19 season to his memory.

It is pleasing that two of our articles are by writers who have not contributed previously to the Newsletter, and we hope that more of you will take up the opportunity of writing for us. Short items, such as reviews of concerts and books, or letters to the editors, are always welcome, as well as full-length articles (c.3000 words). With the latter in particular it's a good idea to send us your proposal first before proceeding to the actual writing. The eleventh issue is scheduled for autumn 2018. The editors are: Dace Ruklisa (dd.rr.tt@btinternet.com), Helene Albrecht (helene.albrecht@gmx.net), Jill House (j.house@ucl.ac.uk) and myself (rabeemus@gmail.com); feel free to contact any of us about your potential contributions. Thanks as always to Dace, Helene and Jill for their hard work in producing this issue.

*Roger Beeson, Deputy Chair, UCL CMC*

## *Nyckelharpa* and concertina – two instrumental rarities

In November 2017 an engaging early evening concert was organised and introduced by Annika Lindskog with the theme of Swedish song in its landscape context. The programme included a set of traditional dances played by Christine Dyer and the present author on the keyed fiddle (*nyckelharpa*) and concertina respectively. Our music evoked four Swedish landscapes: ‘Äppelbo Gånglåt’, a walking tune composed by Karl Johan Karlström (1826-1917) known as Ärtbergs-Kalle, one of several famous folk musicians born amid the forests of Tiomilaskogen; ‘Fanteladda’, a traditional dance from Finnskog, on the Norwegian border; ‘Lappkungens Polska’, a dance from the county of Jämtland in mid-Sweden; and ‘Slängpolska efter Byss-Calle No.32’ by the prolific Carl Ersson Bössa (1783-1847), musician and fisherman from the county of Uppsala, where the Gulf of Bothnia joins the Baltic Sea. After the event CMC members asked many questions, not about the music so much as the unusual instruments on which it was performed.



*Michael Hebbert and Christine Dyer performing on duet concertina and nyckelharpa. The image is from a video recorded by UCL colleague Dr. Sue Swift of the Institute for Child Health. The video was filmed in St Anne’s Limehouse, one of Nicholas Hawksmoor’s great churches.*

As Alexander Buchner explains in *Folk Music Instruments*, the Swedish *nyckelharpa* or keyed fiddle is a direct descendent of the *fidula* whose popularity in mediaeval times is evidenced in stained glass windows, manuscript illuminations and carved wooden misericords throughout Europe. Equipped with a drone, a wheel and a handle it became the street musician’s hurdy-gurdy. Played with a short

bow to facilitate rhythmic expression and with sympathetic strings for resonance, it survived uniquely in the farmsteads and hamlets of rural Sweden, being suited to the complex rhythms of the local folk traditions. Even here it had dwindled almost to extinction by the mid-twentieth century until saved by the instrument-maker and musicologist Eric Sahlström (1912-1986). Christine Dyer is one of the leading performers in this country, running monthly workshops for Scandinavian music enthusiasts in Fitzrovia.

The concertina has a very different history, being invented, patented and manufactured by the notable Victorian scientist Sir Charles Wheatstone (1802-1875). As Professor of Experimental Philosophy at King's College London he contributed extensively to the development of electrical engineering, telegraphy, optics, acoustics and cryptography, but his *Oxford DNB* entry also credits him with 'one of the few original British musical instrument designs'. Concertina manufacture became the staple of the family musical instrument business, based at 20 Conduit Street W1, which he ran with his brother William from 1823. *Sound Knowledge: music and science in London 1789-1851*, a recent collection of essays edited by James Q. Davies and Ellen Lockhart, offers fascinating insights into the musical life of this supposedly unmusical city, and its intertwining with applied science. Many musical contraptions appeared at the Crystal Palace among the fruits of modern technology for the Great Exhibition of 1851 – Peter and Ann MacTaggart list them all. Hector Berlioz was a member of the distinguished jury adjudicating the instruments on display for the award of medals. He rejected most of these 'abortive and useless' experiments, admitting only the saxophone and concertina for extended discussion in his *Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* of 1851. He liked the concertina's sweet expressive tone but was exasperated by the way each octave comprised fourteen enharmonic tones, with separate buttons for G $\sharp$ , Ab, D $\sharp$  and Eb, 'in accordance with acoustical theory but contrary to musical practice'. James Davies illuminates the scientific logic behind Wheatstone's initial refusal to apply equal temperament tuning. He later relented, perhaps through friendly persuasion from the German acoustician Johann Matthias Stroh.

Wheatstone had launched his invention around 1835, bringing out a second version under patent 10,041 of 1844. It was taken up by the guitar virtuoso Giulio Regondi (1827-1872) who made it fashionable through his dazzling performances of arrangements and specially commissioned concert pieces. *The Wheatstone English Concertina in Victorian England* by the New York musicologist Allan W. Atlas explores this art-music repertoire from the concertina's heyday and tries to explain how in the later nineteenth century it fell from grace to become the cheap and popular accompaniment of folk-dancers in the countryside, music-hall and busking in towns. He illustrates the shift with literary examples, contrasting the concertina of the erudite but dastardly Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* of 1860 with its use as a symbol of – at best – demotic vulgarity, at worst deprav-

ity in the writings of George Gissing. Percy Scholes's *Mirror of Music 1844-1944* charts the same trajectory through the columns of the *Musical Times*, whose editor caused a stir in June 1891 by bracketing the concertina with 'the mouth-organ, the mirliton and the kazoo'.

How many instruments, Allan Atlas asks, have suffered such lexicographical abuse as the concertina in the standard text by Bragard and De Hen, *Les Instruments de Musique dans l'Art et l'Histoire*: 'invented in England 1844 [the date is incorrect, comments A.A.] ... enjoyed a great vogue ... still frequently played by clowns of the present day'? Worse was the coverage in successive editions of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The first edition of 1904 contained an entry written some decades earlier by Sir George Grove himself, who observed: 'much variety of tone [\*] can be obtained by a skillful player and it has the power of being played with great expression and complete sostenuto and staccato', adding that it can play violin, flute and oboe music without alteration [\*\*]. Subsequent editors inserted the un-lexicographical comments \* *but highly unpleasant tone*, and \*\* *though the quality of their tone becomes sadly debased*. In 1980 the first edition of Stanley Sadie's *New Grove* did fuller justice to the nineteenth-century concertina, but the article's technical coverage was incomplete and contemporary performance was identified only with the music hall and folk club. The omissions were at last rectified by Allan W. Atlas with a four-page entry for the second edition of the *New Grove* (2001).

Atlas links the concertina's trajectory with an interesting phenomenon that seems to have no parallel in musical history – a failure to standardise what might be called its software. Hector Berlioz complained, as a composer, that the instrument's range varied according to the manufacturer's whim: more fundamentally, so did the physical arrangement of notes and buttons. From early times, apparently identical squeezeboxes would be unplayable unless the musician's fingers happened to be trained on their particular pattern. Wheatstone marketed two distinct systems, the first ('English') allocating notes on stave lines to the right hand and spaces to the left, the second ('Double' or 'Duet') giving all low notes to the left hand and high to the right. Other manufacturers applied the suck-blow principle of the mouth organ to offer diatonic 'Anglo-German' or 'Anglo' instruments where the notes played by buttons would change with each shift of the bellows. Fresh entrants to the market brought their own improvements. John Hill MacCann patented a different 'Duet' arrangement in 1898; the Liverpool musical instrument manufacturers Crane & Sons developed their own system, manufacturing it for the Salvation Army under the 'Triumph' brand; a fourth Duet system closer to that of the Anglo was devised by Charles Jeffries and produced from the 1890s; the Wheatstone Company returned to the fray with a fresh re-arrangement in 1950; and Brian Hayden patented yet another Duet system (GB2131592) as recently as 1986. Any student wishing to take up the concertina had to choose between ten incompatible

operating systems. So closely spaced are the buttons that it is near-impossible for the motor-memory of fingers trained in one system to translate to another. The instrument played at the Chamber Music Club concert in November 2017 was an arcane 51-button Jeffries Duet, a rare type with few extant examples, fewer contemporary players, no new production and (unlike the *nyckelharpa*) no prospect of revival, selected for no better reason than that sixty years ago one happened to be displayed in the window of Reidy's music shop in Blackburn, Lancashire, just in time for an eleventh birthday present.

The multiplicity of operating systems is nicely explained by the technology of instrument production. Concertinas were always manufactured by modest horizontally integrated workshops, combining all the specialist skills required for production: metal-work for reeds, springs and levers, fine joinery for the resonating chambers, feltwork for the pads, kid leather for the bellows, silver or ivory for the buttons, and the fancy-work of decorative endplates. Emerging from the intensely competitive and secretive entrepreneurial milieu of London industry described by Peter Hall and Donna Loftus, the concertina could never be standardised from the supply side, and despite the success of concertina bands, none of the markets for the various types of instrument was of a scale to induce standardisation and mass production from the demand side.

So the history of the concertina comprises multiple sub-narratives linked to local cultures or even individual performers around the world. Only with the arrival of the internet has it become possible to discern a wider picture. For example, the 600-page *Anglo-German Concertina in Social History*, researched online by the retired Texan petrochemical engineer Dan Worrall, traces the diffusion of the humble push-pull instrument through such diverse musical cultures as westward migration of the Mormons, shanties on the foredeck of sailing ships, South African Boers, South African Zulus, English Morris dancers and the sublimely virtuosic jigs and reels of Irish folk tradition. It's 'a dizzying array of social contexts and musical forms,' as Gage Averill writes in his review of Worrall's two-volume work for *Ethnomusicology*. Another systematisation of the complex world of concertinas is provided by the online resource <[www.concertina.com](http://www.concertina.com)>. This website brings together the detailed specification of all ten operating systems accompanied by the archives of their designers and instrument-makers. It is the work of Robert Gaskins, the Californian software engineer who invented Powerpoint and established it as the indispensable industry-standard presentation software first for Apple and then for Windows. On retirement from Microsoft in 1993 Gaskins switched his attention to the concertina collection and archive at the Horniman Museum in London. Serendipitously, his work on concertina systems explains the lamentable failure of standardisation, or glorious creative free-for-all, that followed Professor

Sir Charles Wheatstone's musical invention.

*Michael Hebbert, Professor Emeritus of Town Planning, The Bartlett, UCL*

Christine Dyer and Michael Hebbert perform together as the duo *Limehouse Cut*. For their news, recordings and videos, consult <<https://worldbox.blog>>.

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## Meet the committee – Helene Albrecht

Roger Beeson: *Helene, you've been a committee member of the CMC for some years now. Could you tell us how you got to know about the Club and what attracted you to it?*

Helene Albrecht: When I enrolled for a master's degree at UCL in 2011, I was quite excited to learn that there was a chamber music club. After all, chamber music had been my focal point in a twenty-eight years long career in music which I had to give up when my family moved from Germany to the UK in 2006. UCL CMC was highly recommended to me by someone in the Law Faculty's administration. However, the size of our reading list would not allow for participation in any other activities at UCL throughout my master's programme. Involvement with the Chamber Music Club happened straight after the completion of my course in 2012 and I am still most grateful for the CMC's policy of openness to anyone who has any affiliation with UCL, including current students, staff members, alumni and retired staff. You would not find such an inspiring chamber music community at many other places.

RB: *What is your own background in music?*

HA: I studied piano between 1984 and 1988 in my home city Aachen in North-Rhine Westphalia. This was quite an interesting time to study music: we were a generation full of idealism and hunger for new ideas. In the face of political and economic uncertainties there was a lot of need and space for the exploration of new teaching methods and creative ways of communicating classical and other styles of music. Music therapy, historic performance practice, music ethnography and interdisciplinary discourse all played into our efforts and were commonplace. It was also a time of freeing ourselves from old-fashioned, prejudiced and dusty instructions on how to play the piano, so that we very much felt the need to strive towards fresh and new interpretations of piano music. Therefore we would compare, analyse and discuss dozens of recordings of the same piece and run day-long

classes when we would teach each other and try to grasp the secret behind truly captivating performances. I found the experience of these intense piano studies very rewarding, couldn't think of any better way to master life as such and from there systematically started to explore different musical fields. Among those were research on the life and work of female composers, music theatre for children, themed chamber music concerts, playing for ballet classes and work for Montessori schools and kindergartens. The piano has always been central to my activities as it allows for the deepest levels of self-reflection and observation and has manifold uses from accompaniment to conceptualisation.

RB: *As well as being a pianist you also sing and have experience of choral conducting. Could you say a little more about that?*

HA: As a child I experienced a lively singing culture in our family: singing would glue otherwise contentious family members together and was a self-evident part of any gathering, providing lots of fun and reconciliation. However, during my time at school and in particular at university I had to realise that singing played a subordinate role for a couple of reasons. Firstly, as pianists we were pre-occupied with the technical challenges of virtuoso piano pieces, always in fierce competition with the growing number of great and unmatched recordings in the age of CD players. Secondly, the post-Nazi trauma had banned German folk-song from our schools for many decades and we had lost a natural feeling for our own musical heritage. This fact became really dreadful when I started teaching: children would often not be able to sing a tune and hence would struggle to feel and to understand the music. Without knowing much about the great Hungarian pedagogue Zoltán Kodály I intuitively entered the same path: doing work in the kindergarten and finding natural approaches to music that would suit every child. Later, in my role as leader of a junior department at a German music school I would systematically apply the Kodály method as a watertight path to singing in tune for anyone. On this basis I was able to found a children's choir of thirty members and for many years we entertained the inhabitants of a middle-sized German town near Frankfurt on all sorts of occasions and with all kinds of programmes. From there moving towards choirs was simple: one of our much needed platforms was the local church. In order to get access I started playing the organ and enrolled in a course for church music. Meanwhile I can't think of any serious approach to music without singing and ultimately without any connection to the spiritual sphere, though it is still tempting to exploit the skilful aspects of music without considering its broader mission and reach. Thankfully, I found a little Catholic church in Camden where I am currently working with about twenty singers aged 6 to 60. We prepare for weekly services and for seasonal feasts such as Easter and Christmas. It makes me really happy when the entire congregation joins in or when we are able to confer a mystical and precious atmosphere onto parts of the services, an experience that I would miss enormously if it was ever to die out. This work is



also challenging and interesting as we have to unify very different levels of skills and knowledge and diverse cultural backgrounds towards satisfying results.

RB: *As a pianist myself, I am envious of your ability to memorise pieces. What's the secret? Or, to put it another way, how do you set about learning a new piece?*

HA: This is a big subject! Actually, I had a fantastic memory when I was a child. I can't recall that during my first years I ever practised my piano pieces – I just played them once and then was able to perform them by memory on request. I had no idea how this came about; I would just feel like a fish in water when playing the piano. Unfortunately, a new teacher overstretched my capabilities. He made me work on far too challenging pieces and I would spend ages on deciphering complex scores. Subsequently I gradually lost my natural confidence and since then was never again able to memorise over a longer time period. Later I would learn that my teacher's unhelpful method was just part of a general problem at our conservatoires: students were overburdened with difficult pieces and lost their abilities to improvise and to memorise. This then became the corner stone of my own motivation to become a piano teacher. While I was able to open paths to my students I am still working hard to overcome my own setback and recently I have discovered multiple ways to restore my original abilities. Whilst the analytical learning of a new piece including its harmonic structure and texture combined with a visual memory is certainly helpful, for me a more holistic approach works best where I play around with the music by various means. Many experiments in this respect could be undertaken in CMC concerts, for which I am most grateful.

RB: *You have a strong commitment to education. Could you give us your thoughts about specialist music teaching, and about music as part of general education?*

HA: Personally, I did not have the chance to visit a specialist music college and explored all facets of music education as a pioneer on the basis of learning by doing. When coming to the UK I came across many well-structured teaching approaches, for example at the Royal College of Organists or the European Association of Piano Teachers that provided holistic and comprehensive programmes to amateurs and professionals alike. My daughters attended the Royal College of Music's Junior Department and also got places at a secondary school with the status of a specialist music college. Both institutions contributed enormously to their rich and varied music education and provided plenty of opportunities. We were fortunate to see many of one daughter's classmates becoming very successful musicians in jazz, pop and classical branches; we also enjoyed many amazing performances of the West London based Ealing Youth Orchestra and experienced an amazing creativity and team spirit among these students. This was very much what my generation of teachers had in mind when becoming aware of music's unlimited beneficial impact on body and mind: conferring new qualities on learning processes of any kind and at any level. My own understanding of music education certainly relates to my heritage of German culture: throughout German history

music has played a central part in shaping societal life. I would even assert that music often provided guidance to the German population after times of devastation and in times of anarchy and new orientation – see the phenomenon of Johann Sebastian Bach or the German Romantic movement. Nowadays we have a better understanding of this power of music through our advances in neurobiology and neurosciences: musical activities allow for flows between the two halves of the brain and are able to control, direct and coordinate spontaneous impulses, not to mention attributes such as complex thinking and multi-tasking. We also have a good understanding of the stages of child development and know exactly which steps have to be done in what progression in order to achieve sustainable and long-term outcomes. However, in recent years there has been a dramatic reduction in the furtherance of these developments. Music education's landscape is somewhat fragmented and music education is far from being recognised in its significance at all levels of society. Time and financial restraints even force music teachers into poor teaching which might backfire. I do hope that these times of change will also turn things for the better for music education, not only at specialist music colleges that still offer an amazing variety and quality but on a general level.

RB: *You've taken on a number of roles in the CMC, and you've been closely involved in some recent developments such as the newsletter and the masterclasses. Could you say something about your various activities in the Club?*

HA: This connects directly to the former question: I am amazed that something like the Chamber Music Club exists in an institution for higher education, because here it puts music into the intellectual context that it deserves but often lacks in our society. In currently often difficult and limiting working situations that many professional musicians face, sharing musical experiences with highly skilled amateurs for whom music remains fulfilment and inspiration is simply uplifting and encouraging. For me the newsletter and the masterclasses are dream projects that would not necessarily have worked so well in a music-specific environment; such projects might even be overlooked in their originality. The ongoing expansion of our newsletter from edition to edition, which attracts more and more new authors, demonstrates that there is a lot of appetite for such a medium. I am very grateful that the CMC newsletter came into life and is flourishing in times of major threats to music education at schools and universities. In respect of the masterclasses I am very glad and a bit proud that we are able to offer those at UCL at such affordable levels and that they are led by distinguished tutors. Masterclasses are always hours of intensified learning and crystallised insights. To share these moments at UCL's educational environment close to other departments, above all on sunny Saturday afternoons in the Haldane Room, is just a privilege for all participants, including our tutors who come from neighbouring academies.

RB: *How do you see the CMC developing over the next few years? Are there any new initiatives you'd like to see? Are there successes we can build on? Areas where*

*we might improve?*

HA: Since I joined the Club six years ago no season has repeated itself; the Chamber Music Club is constantly evolving, changing, progressing. This is very much driven by our members and their individual skills and preferences. In this sense we are doing very well: concerts are always interesting and stimulating which is also reflected in the enthusiastic and loyal participation of our audience. Our reputation has reached other universities and people from the Camden neighbourhood, so that we often have guests from outside at our events. Regarding our programmes, there were years when cooperation with other departments at UCL was prominent, for instance the French Revolution concert in cooperation with the Art Museum, and a concert on composers in London combined with an exhibition run by the library, just to mention two. It would be great to build on these experiences and to connect more often to other societies and faculties. There are countless themes to be explored which might be more obvious to musicians than to academics and students without any musical affiliations. Over the years we have also introduced some measures that seek to bring people together and to better integrate newcomers, for instance the performance offers list run by Tabitha, the masterclasses and programmes that involve many performers. Members make lively use of our Baroque list and there is a very fruitful cooperation with the UCL Music Society. One could yet think of more activities that would bring people together, such as chamber music weekends in appropriate facilities or visiting concerts at London's unique chamber music venues in groups. Much, though, depends on people's availabilities and at times it seems that studying, teaching and working in UCL administration do not leave much space for other commitments. However, as CMC committee members do their work voluntarily and simply out of passion, and as musicians are hard-working and decent people anyway – if I may say so – the Club's success builds on some valuable assets that are often rare in professional environments: the smooth cooperation of many forces without distinguishing people's status, an unrestricted realisation of good ideas for the sake of all involved and for the sake of gorgeous music. This is something quite unique and I just hope that in the future it will embrace and inspire more and more members and listeners.

RB: *Thank you, Helene, for your informative and thought-provoking answers!*

## Thoughts on Opus 1

To accompany the 'Opus 1' concert on 24 October 2017, organised by the UCL Chamber Music Club, I would like to reflect on the pieces by Franck and Prokofiev that were presented in the programme, as well as highlight some other Op.1 solo and ensemble pieces that are noteworthy in piano literature. This short article (as an index of sorts!) may offer suggestions for further listening.

While there are other catalogue-number systems created by musicologists, such as the *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis* (BWV), Op.1 typically denotes the composer's first major published work or their first substantial work. In many cases, a composer would try to create an authoritative impression of their individual musical style with their first opus. Works that are not published with an opus number may later be categorised as 'Works without opus number' (WoO.), such as Beethoven's piano trios, piano quartets, and wind octet that preceded his Op.1, and numbered chronologically.

Among the first composers to index their own oeuvre were Haydn (in the *Entwurfkatalog*) and Mozart (in *Verzeichnüss aller meiner Werke...*). While these catalogues are obsolete today, replaced by the Hob. and K. numbering system respectively, they are a modest example of the emergence of the modern concept of creative authority in the eighteenth century.

### BEETHOVEN

Beethoven is the first great composer to systematically order his works by opus numbers. His trios for violin, cello, and piano, Op.1 Nos. 1-3, were published in 1795, the same year that he wrote his first piano sonata. Inheriting the classical chamber music traditions developed by Mozart and Haydn, Beethoven continued expanding on the medium of the piano trio, which was at the time associated with more domestic chamber music-making, and boldly presented to the Viennese musical public three full-scale four-movement trios. The intensely lyric Third Trio in C minor, in particular, established Beethoven's distinctive new dramatic and dynamic musical style for all time.

### MENDELSSOHN

Mendelssohn started publishing his compositions in 1823. His Piano Quartets Nos.1-3 (Opp. 1 to 3), despite being written only between the ages of 13 and 15, are already ingrained with Mendelssohn-esque fleeting, light, and gracious figurations.

## SCHUMANN

Schumann's Opp. 1 to 23 were dedicated entirely to the solo piano, but he also composed vocal, chamber, and orchestral works before his publishing debut. The *Abegg Variations*, Op.1, which first appeared in 1831, captured the imagination of critics and audiences. Schumann continued elaborating on the variation form and technique – he contributed much fantastic repertoire to this field, including his last composition, the incredibly beautiful and introspective *Variations on a Theme in E flat major* (WoO.24).

## BRAHMS

The Piano Sonata No.1 in C major, Op.1 is the most performed out of the three piano sonatas that Brahms wrote, all in the same year of 1853. Although he completed the Sonata in F sharp minor (Op.2) earlier, the C major is the most exuberant and virtuosic. The audience is instantly thrust into the musical world of Brahms by the forceful chordal opening statement, often compared with Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier', followed by a canon in thirds, *ben marcato*, and the warm and poetic second subject, which brings into view his late intermezzi.

## FRANCK

Composed at the age of eighteen in 1840, Franck's Piano Trio in F sharp minor, Op.1 is a prototype for his later much more significant chamber music in the cyclic form, such as the Sonata for Violin and Piano in A major (1886). Although the composition is not yet as refined, the intense chordal textures and ostinatos in the trio evoke the drama and rich harmonisation in his later oratorio works and organ pieces.

## PROKOFIEV

In contrast with Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms, the musical styles and sounds of Prokofiev and Franck's mature works are less prominent in their first opuses. Premiered in Moscow in 1910, Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No.1, in F minor, which consists of a single movement, is unexpectedly conservative and Romantic in style compared with his later polytonal explorations. Perhaps, though, the explosive fully accented chromatic descending octave scale in the left hand in the opening anticipates Prokofiev's hallmark modern, theatrical, and 'grotesque' musical style.

## BERG

The Piano Sonata in B minor, Op.1, published in 1910, is not only Berg's first major composition, but is also a *magnum opus*. Self-contained in one movement, the sonata is a culmination and crystallisation of the ideas that he had developed as a pupil of Schoenberg. In an earlier phase under Schoenberg, between 1905 and 1908, Berg produced several works that gravitate towards the late-Romantic style, including a set of Seven Early Songs for mezzo voice and piano and Twelve Variations for the Piano.

To come full circle, I think Berg's Piano Sonata could rival Beethoven's Op.1 Piano Trios in the sense that both works elevated existing musical concepts and transcended the influence of their predecessors and contemporaries. From a pianist's perspective, many of the works listed here are notoriously technically demanding and challenging to perform. Compared with music for other instruments, these piano compositions are especially direct, communicative, and intimate, as most of these composers were brilliant keyboardists and public performers themselves.

Finally, tying these works together are the vividly expressed new musical ideas and virtuosic piano writing which mirror the artistic determination of these composers in the early moments of their musical development. By studying and listening to these compositions designated as Op.1, glimpses of each composer's creative intuition are revealed and these initial works serve as a key to augment our understanding of their musical language and canon of compositions.

*Yvonne Cheng*

## UCL Chamber Music Club in the 1980s: a personal memoir

I first joined UCL in July 1981 as a Research Fellow in the Department of Computer Science. In retrospect this seems to have marked the beginning of a great period in the College's development, both architecturally and academically. When I arrived, the main quadrangle was still occupied by green prefab buildings erected in the aftermath of the war, which had inflicted considerable damage on the College. The two classical wings that form the Gower Street entrance had yet to be completed, having been left abandoned in an unfinished state for decades, presumably through lack of funds or more pressing financial concerns. One wing was occupied by the Computer Science Department and my own room looked out immediately onto the main quad – a not unpleasant prospect, despite the prefabs.

Over the next decade everything changed. The prefabs disappeared, the Gower Street entrance was completed more or less according to the original nineteenth-

century plan, the main quad was re-designed, and colourful ginkgo trees were planted, replacing the several giant limes that had toppled in the great storm of 1987. And in the summer of 1985 the Chamber Music Club got its very own harpsichord!

It is an interesting experience to browse through the Club's concert archive from those years to note the high points and the regular patterns of repeated performances of favourite items. For me it has been rather like discovering an old diary, reminding one of many half-forgotten events. There is no record of my playing in any concert during my first year at UCL, probably because I was too concerned with the research project on which I had been engaged to work. Unfortunately, no similar diary exists for that side of my life, with the effect that my memories of the Chamber Music Club are now more vivid than of any academic work with which I was involved.

The first concert in which I seem to have appeared was in March 1984, playing Couperin's *Premier concert royal* on the Baroque flute, accompanied by viola da gamba and harpsichord (borrowed for the occasion from a friend). This may have been the first attempt to use 'original' instruments for early music at any of the Club's concerts. Prior to this there were plenty of recorder and piano combinations playing Bach or Telemann sonatas, and even an occasional appearance of a spinet or 'electric' harpsichord. I recall that the spinet was usually borrowed from King's College and transported up to UCL in a taxi cab! For some years I had been a serious student of the Baroque flute, having studied in the late 1970s with Stephen Preston at the Guildhall School of Music and immersed myself in the peculiar techniques needed for playing the French Baroque repertoire. It was a time when the fashion for playing Baroque music on 'authentic' instruments was beginning to dominate the musical world to the extent that even professional modern instrument orchestras were having to abandon this repertoire, much to their annoyance. Clearly UCL needed its own harpsichord and we set about finding some way of acquiring one. A little note is attached to the concert programme for 16 May 1985 saying that 'The Chamber Music Club has recently decided to establish a fund for the purchase of a harpsichord and this concert is intended to inaugurate our campaign. Any donations would be gratefully received.' The concert was also notable in being one of the very few to ever feature Baroque dance along with Baroque music, still a rarity on the concert platform.

The Club did manage to collect a little money for this purpose from donations and also obtained a substantial grant from the UCL Friends Trust. This was enough to purchase a kit of parts for a copy of a Ruckers single manual Flemish harpsichord with the intention that I would undertake to assemble it over the summer vacation. One look at the box of cut-out wooden shapes, pins, jacks and wires, and my thoughts of ever completing this project on any reasonable timescale vanished. I sought the advice of a friend who was then head of the musical instrument-

making section of the London College of Furniture. He happened to have a student, Andrew Wooderson, who was just completing his degree and about to embark on a career as professional harpsichord maker. He is now one of the finest makers in the country and assembling our kit was probably his first commercial project. It may have taken Andrew some months to complete for the inaugural concert did not take place until the following March (and again featured Baroque dance along with the music of Purcell, Handel, Boismortier and Mozart).

From then on, the harpsichord featured quite regularly in our programmes. It even found a room for itself in the basement below the Wilkins building near to where the present piano practice room is located. This was even more of an asset as it meant that keyboard players now had the opportunity to practise on a real instrument. Sadly, that opportunity was lost when the harpsichord room was gobbled up by an ever-expanding catering service, as the College itself grew in numbers. It now languishes – well cared for but largely inaccessible – in the Provost's cupboard, a potent symbol of how the rapid growth of the College has sometimes impacted negatively upon more peripheral activities.

Throughout this period, concerts were generally held on Tuesdays or Thursdays between 5.30 and 6.30 with one or two each term at lunchtime. As today, the Haldane Room was the main venue but with occasional forays into the North Cloisters for slightly grander events such as the annual Christmas concert. These were possibly even more elaborate affairs than today, with food and drink on a lavish scale served afterwards in what was then known as the Margaret Murray Room. Entry to the feast was by pre-paid ticket obtainable from the committee. At that time the Margaret Murray served as a common room for female members of academic staff. It now houses offices for Administration Services and its loss thus represents yet another victim of College expansion!

Another valued asset of the Club during the 80s was the piano practice room. This was located in what was probably another 'temporary' building tucked away behind Foster Court (and possibly even more difficult to find than our present one). I think it may have been acquired through the persuasive powers of our then Chair, Gertrude Keir, for it was adjacent to another 'temporary' building housing her own office. Although freezing cold in winter, it was splendidly isolated and you could play as loudly as you liked without fear of disturbing anyone. In fact, we shared the building with the student drama club located downstairs. Gertrude served as Chair from 1968 until her death in 1985 and was a redoubtable supporter of the Club in any negotiations with College authorities. When her husband Lawrence Wigglesworth too passed away a couple of years later he left a substantial sum to the Club in their memory.

Another Club stalwart throughout these years was a very young David Howard, acoustics expert and electrical engineer by trade, but enthusiastic choral conductor and keyboard player by vocation. His expertise was much missed when he



left to take up a post offering more music-related research at the University of York. It was interesting to learn that he has recently been appointed to head up a new Electrical Engineering school at Royal Holloway, University of London, one of the few universities that still retains a strong music department. There he will be responsible for fostering yet more interdisciplinary research between these two subjects.

Another notable member was David Shields, a young engineering student with great musical gifts who stayed on for several years at UCL as an administrative assistant in order to be able to participate in the CMCs activities. His particular interest was in choral singing and recorder playing. Sadly, he died shortly after leaving UCL.

One of the most frequent performers at our concerts during the 1980s was John Lindon, whose sad passing on 11 February of this year was conveyed to the Chamber Music Club shortly after and in time for several members, including myself, to attend the funeral. The important role the Club had played in his life was movingly told by his three daughters, who at various times had attended performances at UCL. John had already been a long-time member of the Chamber Music Club by the time I joined in 1981. He was also for many years Treasurer of the Club and was instrumental in finding the resources for purchase of the harpsichord, as well as for replacement of our by then ageing piano (which I believe had been in the Club's possession since its beginning in the 1950s). A memorial concert for John is planned for later this year, at which it is hoped to reprise several of his favourite and much-performed pieces.

The Club can take pride in the way that it has encouraged many promising musicians to pursue a career in music following their (non-musical) studies at UCL. Joseph Spooner, for example, is a fine professional cellist who began his career by playing regularly in our concerts while a post graduate student in Classics, following this with studies at the Royal Academy of Music. A similar path has been taken by several former members.

Among the very few names appearing in the 1980s concert archive that are still to be found performing in Club concerts today is David Miller. He must, in fact, be our longest serving member as he joined the Club as a student in the 1960s. It is perhaps a measure of the significant role that the Chamber Music Club plays in the lives of its members that many remain involved throughout their careers and into retirement, perhaps providing a more enduring link to the College than any academic attachment.

*Bill Tuck, February 2018*